

held under such conditions, it is entirely possible that President Hernandez may win—or he may not. But for him, or any candidate, to obtain the mandate required to unite the country and make a credible case that his government is a deserving partner of the United States, it will need to be by rejecting the serious flaws of this election and demonstrating to all the people of Honduras and this hemisphere what real democracy looks like.

I ask unanimous consent that today's Bloomberg View editorial calling for a new democratic election in Honduras be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE U.S. SHOULD BACK NEW ELECTIONS IN HONDURAS

(By James Gibney and Michael Newman)

LATIN AMERICA NEEDS TO START ITS BIG ELECTION YEAR ON THE RIGHT FOOT

There is only one way out of Honduras's deepening political crisis, and that is a new presidential election. It's a solution the U.S., with its long history in Latin America, should help bring about—although it would help if it had an ambassador there.

The certification this week of incumbent President Juan Orlando Hernandez's contested victory in last month's election has brought Hondurans into the streets, continuing a wave of violent demonstrations that have claimed at least 24 lives. It comes after a deeply flawed ballot-counting process that included long delays, after which Hernandez's early deficit mysteriously disappeared. (The final tally put him ahead by about 1.5 percent.) The vote was denounced by numerous observers—including the Organization of American States, which has called for new elections.

Yet the U.S., which has no ambassador in Tegucigalpa or an assistant secretary of State for the hemisphere, has been only mildly critical. When Hernandez's victory was certified, it urged opposing political parties to "raise any concerns they may have." And just after the disputed election, the State Department renewed aid to Honduras—a move widely interpreted as tacit support for Hernandez.

Hernandez has won friends in Washington with his willingness to crack down on crime and illegal migration to the U.S., and his investor-friendly policies. At the same time, his administration has been responsible for ugly human rights abuses and been implicated in several high-profile corruption scandals. Moreover, he has extended his tenure only by packing Honduras's Supreme Court to lift the country's one-term limit for presidents. The head of the court responsible for certifying election results is one of Hernandez's close allies.

Even before last month's flawed vote, Honduras was notable for the lack of popular confidence in its electoral mechanisms. And if it's stability that Washington seeks, these disputed results don't promise to achieve it. Protracted unrest will only make fighting drugs and illegal migration harder.

The contrast between the OAS and the U.S. could also hurt U.S. influence and credibility. The U.S. has rightly supported the OAS in its efforts to hold Venezuela accountable for its electoral crimes. If it fails to do the same in Honduras, it risks setting a dangerous double standard. This would be especially damaging in a year when nearly two out of three Latin Americans are scheduled to go to the polls.

As the administration's just-released National Security Strategy says, "Stable, friendly, and prosperous states in the Western Hemisphere enhance our security and benefit our economy." The best way to ensure that Honduras becomes one is to support free, transparent and fair elections.

NOMINATION OBJECTION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I intend to object to any unanimous consent requests at the present time relating to the nominations of David J. Ryder, of New Jersey, to be Director of the Mint, and of Isabel Marie Keenan Patelunas, of Pennsylvania, to be Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of the Treasury.

I will object because the Department of the Treasury has failed to respond to a letter I sent on September 29, 2017, to a bureau within the Department seeking documents relevant to an ongoing investigation by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. Despite several phone calls between committee staff and Treasury personnel to prioritize particular requests within that letter, the Treasury Department has to date failed to provide any documents.

My objection is not intended to question the credentials of Mr. Ryder or Ms. Patelunas in any way. However, the Department must recognize that it has an ongoing obligation to respond to congressional inquiries in a timely and reasonable manner.

ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, in 2008, the Senate took up the question of whether to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I wasn't here at the time, but I remember the issue prompted a rigorous debate.

The Senate spent months on the topic. Experts weighed in, and the American people had a chance to share their views in a fairly open process.

It is worth pausing to recall the context for that discussion. In 2008, America produced nearly 7 million barrels of oil a day and imported another 12 million. The price of oil was roughly \$150 a barrel. There was talk about the world hitting "peak oil."

In that context, one side claimed that drilling in the Arctic Refuge was needed to boost domestic production, reduce foreign imports, and lower prices at the pump. The other side countered that any economic benefit from drilling was far outweighed by the need to preserve the Arctic Refuge, a jewel of our public lands, a vital habitat for wildlife, and a sacred place for the Gwich'in people—a place so sacred they are reluctant to even enter it.

In the end, after weighing the facts and considering the costs, 56 Senators, included 6 Republicans, voted to protect the Arctic Refuge from drilling.

That was 2008. Now fast forward to 2017. The Arctic Refuge remains a jewel of our public lands. It remains a vital

habitat for so many flora and fauna. It remains a sacred place for local tribes, and one of America's most spectacular wild places. The case for preservation has not changed.

By contrast, the case for drilling has never been weaker. Compared to 2008, domestic oil production has nearly doubled. Oil imports are down 22 percent. The price of oil has fallen 50 percent. Terminals we built to import oil and gas are now being used to export oil and gas.

For all these reasons, unlike 2008, oil companies are not clamoring for more opportunities to drill. Just last week, oil companies had the chance to bid on 10.3 million acres open for drilling in Alaska. In the end, less than 1 percent of the land was leased.

Think about that. We are not even using all of the land now available for drilling in Alaska. It defies reason that we would open up even more, especially in a place as treasured as the Arctic Refuge.

All of this is to say that, if it made little sense to drill in 2008, it makes no sense to drill now.

So it should surprise no one that the other side doesn't want a real debate. That is why they tucked this into their massive tax bill, hoping to sneak it in under the hood.

Their justification? We need revenue from the oil to pay down the deficit that we are creating with this tax bill.

There are two problems with that. First, the Congressional Budget Office found that, because of low demand, revenue from drilling would be far less than projected, potentially hundreds of millions less.

Second, the only reason we are having this conversation is because the other side wants to spend \$1.4 trillion on tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest Americans.

Consider this: Their plan spends \$37 billion to give an average tax cut of \$64,000 to those lucky enough to make over \$1 million a year.

To help pay for that, we are about to drill in one of the most stunning places in America.

I am not opposed to oil and gas production. We need transition fuels as we move toward low-carbon, renewable energy. I also recognize that, for many small towns across America, the oil and gas sector is a rare source of steady, high-paying jobs.

In Colorado, we have managed to increase energy production to meet our growing demand. But we have done so in a way that protects our public lands and creates jobs, for those in oil and gas and our thriving outdoor economy. We have found a way for all sides to win.

If my colleagues from Alaska want to increase energy production, create jobs, and spur growth, I stand ready to help, but let's not pretend that drilling in the Arctic Refuge is the only way to do that.

There are places in America where you can set up an oil rig, lay down